

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace claims 1-19, with the following new claims 20-39:

20. (NEW) Apparatus for applying at least one coating to objects by vapour deposition (PVD) under vacuum, comprising:

- a PVD device for coating an object under a vacuum;
- at least one lock separating the PVD-device from an ambient environment;
- a transport device which extends through the PVD-device and into the lock, wherein the transport device is adapted to transport objects arranged on carriers, and the PVD device is adapted for semi-continuous treatment of objects arranged on the carriers;
- a preprocessing device for performing a preprocessing on the object; and
- a postprocessing device for postprocessing the object, wherein the transport device extends through said at least one lock, the preprocessing device and the postprocessing device.

21. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the carriers are elongate and object holders are present on the carriers, the object holders being rotatable and the transport device being adapted to move the carriers substantially in the longitudinal direction and to rotate the object holders in the PVD device.

22. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 21, wherein the PVD device is connected to the ambient environment by a single lock, the transport device extends through the lock and the lock is adapted to feed a carrier simultaneously into and out of the PVD device.

23. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 22, wherein the transport device has a closed configuration and extends in two directions through the PVD device.

24. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 23, wherein a buffer for the carriers is arranged between the preprocessing device and the PVD device.

25. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein a buffer for the carriers is arranged between the PVD device and the postprocessing device.

26. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein the buffers are adapted to move the carriers in transverse direction.

27. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the preprocessing device comprises a blower device for blowing dust from the objects.

28. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the preprocessing device comprises an application device for applying a lacquer to the objects that cures with UV or IR radiation, and a device for irradiating the lacquered objects with the relevant radiation.

29. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 28, wherein the preprocessing device comprises a surface processing device coupled to the application device for processing the surface of the objects prior to the application device applying the lacquer.

30. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the postprocessing device comprises an application device for applying a lacquer onto the objects that cures UV radiation, and a device for irradiating the lacquered objects with the UV radiation.

31. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein a loading/unloading station is placed between the postprocessing device and the preprocessing device for unloading processed objects and loading objects for processing.

32. (NEW) Carrier for use in an apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein an object holder is present on the carrier, the object holder being interchangeable with an object holder present on another carrier.

33. (NEW) Carrier as claimed in claim 32, wherein the object holder is placed on a vertically extending shaft mounted rotatably in the carrier.

34. (NEW) Carrier as claimed in claim 33, wherein a toothed wheel is arranged on the shaft for driving the shaft in rotation.

35. (NEW) Carrier as claimed in claim 34, wherein the toothed wheel is arranged under a top side of the carrier

36. (NEW) Carrier as claimed in claim 35, wherein the toothed wheel enters openings arranged in the carrier and protrudes outside side walls of the carrier.

37. (NEW) Apparatus adapted for use with the carrier recited in claim 15, the apparatus including a cam for engaging in and rotating the toothed wheel during passage of the carrier.

38. (NEW) Apparatus as claimed in claim 37, wherein the cam forms part of a drivable chain for causing the shaft to rotate independently of the linear movement of the carrier.